

**Committee on House Administration
Subcommittee on Elections**

**Election Reform Hearing
“Machines & Software”
Thursday, March 15, 2007**

Opening Remarks

Welcome to the first Subcommittee on Elections of the Committee on House Administration hearing. I am honored to be serving as Chair of this subcommittee and look forward to working with Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee Mr. McCarthy and the rest of the committee. The purpose of this hearing is to begin to look at election reform, specifically, the tools of voting: machines and software and making these tools accessible to all.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) provided funds for state and local government units to replace outdated punch card systems with more advanced machines. In order to have received the funds, states and local government units were required to develop a plan to upgrade their voting systems. Unfortunately, the nation still has not fixed the machinery of voting.

All systems need better testing, maintenance and independent certification. All systems must be auditable. Besides being auditable, these systems and the software used in them must be open. The idea behind open source is very simple: When programmers can read, redistribute, and modify the source code for a piece of software, the software evolves. It can be improved and adapted.

Numerous reports from the GAO, our colleagues in the Judiciary Committee, the Secretary of State of California, and academics have called for greater accountability in voting machines and software. Voting system software should be publicly disclosed. All systems must also allow voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently.

We need to better define voting system standards. I am excited to have these two panels before us to discuss pertinent issues in election reform. Changes are needed. This hearing and any future hearing are an opportunity for us to hear what possibilities are out there to make significant improvements in our election system.